

The Voice of Your Community

Wrentham Resident Pens Third Novel

BY GRACE ALLEN

John Murzycki always wanted to write a book and in 2017 that dream came true with his novel “Elthea’s Realm.” The book was the start of a series and the launch of a new career as a fiction writer.

Now, just four years later, Murzycki has released “Elthea’s Paradox,” the third book in his fantasy series about computer viruses coming to life. It follows the 2018 book “Elthea’s Gambit.”

As a former marketing executive for area technology companies, the Wrentham resident has drawn upon his own background, coupled with a healthy dose of imagination, for the plots and themes in his books.

“I start with the question, What if? What if something technology-based evolved into something very different than what we expected it to be?” he said.



John Murzycki of Wrentham has written the third novel in his Elthea’s Realm series.

The novels depict five former college friends as they confront the forces of evil embodied in creatures called Bots, malware and virus software come to life. The friends

were once enrolled in a college course called The Utopia Project, and it was that project

NOVEL

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Towns Helping Seniors Get Vaccinated

BY GRACE ALLEN

Norfolk and Wrentham are taking different approaches to the COVID vaccine rollout for senior citizens. Like other communities in Massachusetts, both towns have had to scramble to figure out how to best assist their most vulnerable citizens during this phase of the pandemic.

On February 11, Norfolk announced it would not hold a vaccine clinic for its oldest citizens, citing numerous challenges and logistical difficulties. After a series of meetings to discuss the feasibility of distributing vaccines in town, town officials decided their best bet would be to help seniors schedule appointments at Gillette Stadium in Foxboro and assist in finding transportation for those needing it. CIC Health, a Cambridge-based health tech company, is operating the vaccination site at Gillette.

Town Administrator Blythe Robinson said the state has placed a higher priority on sites

like Gillette instead of municipal vaccine clinics.

“The state is not likely to provide vaccines to communities in close proximity to sites like Gillette,” she explained. “Further, the state will be more likely to provide vaccines to towns that regionalize and work together to have a clinic, but not towns near the larger sites the state has already established.”

In addition to the lack of shots, other issues hampering towns from holding clinics include special storage and handling procedures for the vaccines, an observation period to watch for possible reactions, and record-keeping.

Still, Wrentham has decided to hold small clinics twice a week—Mondays and Wednesdays for now—at the public safety building in town. Unlike Norfolk, Wrentham has two full-time public health nurses and has been

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NOVEL*continued from page 1*

that caused the Bots to hate them and attack them. The reunited friends are plunged into a mythical world where they battle the creatures and try to save civilization from destruction.

Murzycki says there are multiple challenges when writing fantasy and science fiction stories.

“How do you create a world that’s exciting and interesting, yet different from our own but that readers can still relate to?” he said. “And the characters are as important as world-building. I want readers to feel for these characters and care about them.”

His characters, especially the protagonist, Philip Matherson, have human frailties, imperfections, and internal struggles readers can identify with. This is important because believable characters help us connect to the fantasy world they inhabit.

Murzycki has a graduate degree in public communications from Boston University, and he

wrote extensively—news articles, blogs, brochures—in his various corporate roles. There wasn’t a lot of room for creativity in that type of writing, so Murzycki practiced his fiction writing at home. The pull to put pen to paper and write a novel had never left him.

“I would come home after a full day of work, read my daughter a bedtime story when she was young, and write for an hour every night,” he said. “I did this for many, many years and it was a learning experience and very different from the writing I did during the day.”

A few years ago, Murzycki decided it was time to write full-time and finally produce that novel. Those nightly writing sessions after work became the seeds of his first book.

Along with the craft of fiction writing, Murzycki had to learn the business side of the book business. His books are independently published but he notes there is a whole industry providing support to self-published authors. He taught himself the

technology and applications to format the novels, but others have provided the editing and cover designs.

Murzycki has lived in Wrentham with his family for close to forty years. He has started writing the fourth book in the series. He does not yet know how it will end.

“Some authors like to have a very tight plot in place before they start writing. I tried that but then completely abandoned it,” he explained. “Part of the joy of writing for me is discovering what might happen along with the reader.”

Characters in fantasy and science fiction novels often face insurmountable odds and challenges through no fault of their own. While Murzycki could not have anticipated the pandemic when he started his series, could the books offer a blueprint for the rest of us as a real-life virus takes over the world? His themes of people banding together fit.

“I’ve tried to concentrate on the characters overcoming the obstacles that have been thrown at them,” he said. “They dig down deep inside to face those odds. Certainly that is relevant to what is happening today.”

To learn more about Murzycki, visit johnmurzycki.com. His books are available in hardcover, paperback, and ebook wherever books are sold.

VACCINATED*continued from page 1*

able to vaccinate its first responders on-site. Seniors 75 and older have also started receiving vaccines at the town-held clinics.

“The senior center has been wonderful in assisting our older residents who do not have computer access with registration for our clinics,” said Public Health Nurse Jeanine Murphy.

According to Janet Angelico, the director of Wrentham’s senior center, at press time the center had registered over 40 seniors for vaccine appointments at the town-held clinics.

Nurse Murphy said Wrentham hopes to continue the clinics for all age groups throughout the vaccine rollout but also notes the state may limit the number of vaccines the town receives because of its location near Gillette.

Norfolk’s senior center is also helping eligible residents sign up for vaccines. Although the chaos of the initial rollout has subsided, online signup for the vaccine can still be difficult, said Council on Aging Director Sherry Norman. The state seems to change the process weekly, and the senior center staff has learned to pivot to keep up.

According to Norman, many eligible seniors in town—or their children—have either called for assistance or have dropped in for help in scheduling vaccine appointments. The senior center has wheelchairs and walkers

to lend out if residents worry about navigating the walk to the building in Patriot Place where the vaccine clinic is held, but Norman notes Gillette has some wheelchairs available and CIC Health staff are on hand to assist guests with mobility issues.

Norman says she maintains a list of trusted volunteers available to drive seniors in need of transportation, but so far it seems most are driving themselves or going with family and friends. Familiarity with the Patriot Place complex, good signage, and easy parking with curbside drop-off have helped.

Norman also points out that some residents have used GATRA GO to get to the stadium. GATRA GO is an on-demand, same day public transit service available to eligible Norfolk and Wrentham residents. Cost is \$2 each way.

“We have a lot of very independent 80-somethings in town,” said Norman, who noted the next eligible group (65-74) may have different needs.

Feedback from seniors after securing an appointment and getting a shot has been positive, said Norman. One Norfolk couple, Richard and Francine McCarthy, reported to Norman that after little success trying to set up appointments themselves, they emailed town officials and immediately received assistance in setting up tandem appointments.

Both Norfolk and Wrentham have sizeable senior populations. Per the last census, Norfolk has 582 people over 75 and 1,287 between the ages of 65 and 74. Wrentham has approximately 878 people over the age of 75 and 1,446 between the ages of 65 and 74. Getting most of those folks vaccinated with or without the state’s support is a herculean effort requiring ingenuity, persistence, and cooperation between town officials.

“We will get through it,” said Norman. “If you look back, who would have thought we’d be in vaccination mode just one year later? That’s remarkable and something we should be excited about.”

Norfolk seniors requiring assistance in making an appointment for the COVID vaccine or getting a ride to Gillette should contact the following: the Coun-

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Your Money, Your Independence

Zoom Your Estate Planning

For most, estate planning receives the greatest amount of procrastination within financial planning.

It's understandable given the formality with an attorney, time commitment, complexity of choices and as parents with young kids thinking who/what ensures your child's continued growth with your untimely demise. Add a pandemic, "we've been meaning to do it" turned into "we should've done it when it was easier and safe".

Surprisingly, many are unaware that last April 28th, Massachusetts Senate Bill 2645 was passed/signed by Governor Baker to allow remote virtual notarization of legal documents through video-conferencing technology.

Yes, you can now work with an estate planning attorney through Zoom and FedEx to develop and complete your holistic estate plan.

I asked David Feakes, who over 20 years ago founded The

Parents Estate Planning Law Firm, PC, to share his firm's experience and client observations to this legislative change.

Early Zoom adoption. "Last March/April, we'd help clients far along by doing signings in parking lots, picnic tables holding umbrellas and while we managed to do it safely, it was unsustainable", says David. "We'd been in communication with our state reps and got our firm's new policies and procedures in place. Once passed, we were proactive with Zoom, not just signings but also helping clients in our discovery phase move forward, as they had just put everything on hold."

Scheduling and engagement is easier for clients. "Parents with kids coordinating to come to our offices in Acton at the same time during work hours is hard", confessed David. "Also the idea of coming to an attorney's office can be intimidating, so now with the ability to do it all from home with kids running around or cats walking across the screen, it's



Glenn Brown

helped relaxed clients and made decision making easier."

What remains constant - the why. "People have had time to reflect on making sure their kids are cared for if something unthinkable happens", shared David. "A will is not enough, we educate clients on legal strategies of trusts, guardianships, power of attorneys, health proxies, tax

planning and legacy distribution. Additionally, as I share our process to get to know a client's family and what's important, I sense calm and relief when we reiterate this can all be done virtually and safely - something normally reserved at the completion of an estate plan."

As a fee-only CFP working with financial planning clients, I'd echo David's observations with Zoom and leveraging virtual technology. In 2018, a few early adopters chose this option

to engage, but today the benefits of time, convenience and ease of access are thankfully felt by all.

The opinions voiced in this material are for general information only and are not intended to provide specific advice or recommendations for any individual.

Glenn Brown is a Holliston resident and owner of PlanDynamic, LLC, www.PlanDynamic.com. Glenn is a fee-only Certified Financial Planner™ helping motivated people take control of their planning and investing, so they can balance kids, aging parents and financial independence.

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cil on Aging at 508-528-4430 or email snorman@norfolk.ma.us; the Board of Health at 508-528-7747 or email bfjol@norfolk.ma.us; or the Town Administrator's Office at 508-440-2855 or email brobinson@norfolk.ma.us.

Wrentham seniors can contact Janet Angelico, the senior center's director, at 508-384-5425 or email jangelico@wrentham.ma.us. Whenever the public health nurses have sufficient vaccines for a clinic, the information will be posted on www.wrentham.ma.us and a town alert notification will be sent out. Residents are urged to sign up for community alerts on the town's website. Vaccine clinics at the public safety building will also be posted on mimmunizations.org.

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Wrentham Unveils New Persian Gulf War Memorial on Town Common

Formal Dedication Ceremony to be Held on Memorial Day

Wrentham's new Persian Gulf War Memorial was unveiled on Thursday, Jan. 28.

The memorial, which is placed on the town common, consists of a stone that displays

a map carving of the Persian Gulf and military emblems on one side, and a list of those who served in the armed forces during the Persian Gulf War from Operation Desert Storm through Operation Enduring Freedom in Iraq, including Afghanistan operations, on the other side.

The Persian Gulf War Memorial project was spearheaded by Wrentham resident and U.S. Army veteran Raymond Rose. The memorial was designed and installed by a local monument company, Tribute in Stone.

The town received a \$15,000 grant from the State Historical Records Advisory Board and a \$16,000 grant from the Sweatt Memorial Trust to subsidize the costs of the Persian Gulf War Memorial. The grants funded both the creation and installation.

Additional support was provided by the Wrentham Board of Selectmen, the Town Common Landscape Committee and the following individuals: Cindy



Thompson, Wrentham Town Clerk; Chad Lovett, Wrentham Director of Facilities; Rebecca Jennings, Veterans Service Agent; Shila & Todd Duffy, Tribute in Stone; and Hayden Holster, local Eagle Scout, who hosted a fundraising project to fund the creation of a walkway approaching the memorial.

The town of Wrentham is planning to hold a formal dedication ceremony on Memorial Day later this year.

"I would like to acknowledge and thank the many residents, town officials and other agencies who came together to make this memorial possible," Town Administrator Kevin Sweet said

in a prepared statement. "A tremendous amount of hard work went into this memorial, and we are pleased to honor the many Wrentham veterans whose names are included on it and look forward to formally dedicating the memorial later this year."

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Even in a Pandemic, Local Theater Shall Persist

BY BRENDAN ZIMMERMAN

The simple joys of the theater, from being part of a live audience to witnessing the dramatic energy of a performance come alive before your eyes have been taken away in the last year. And for Roundabout Productions, a local nonprofit theater group, the challenge of adapting theater to a virtual audience has been profound.

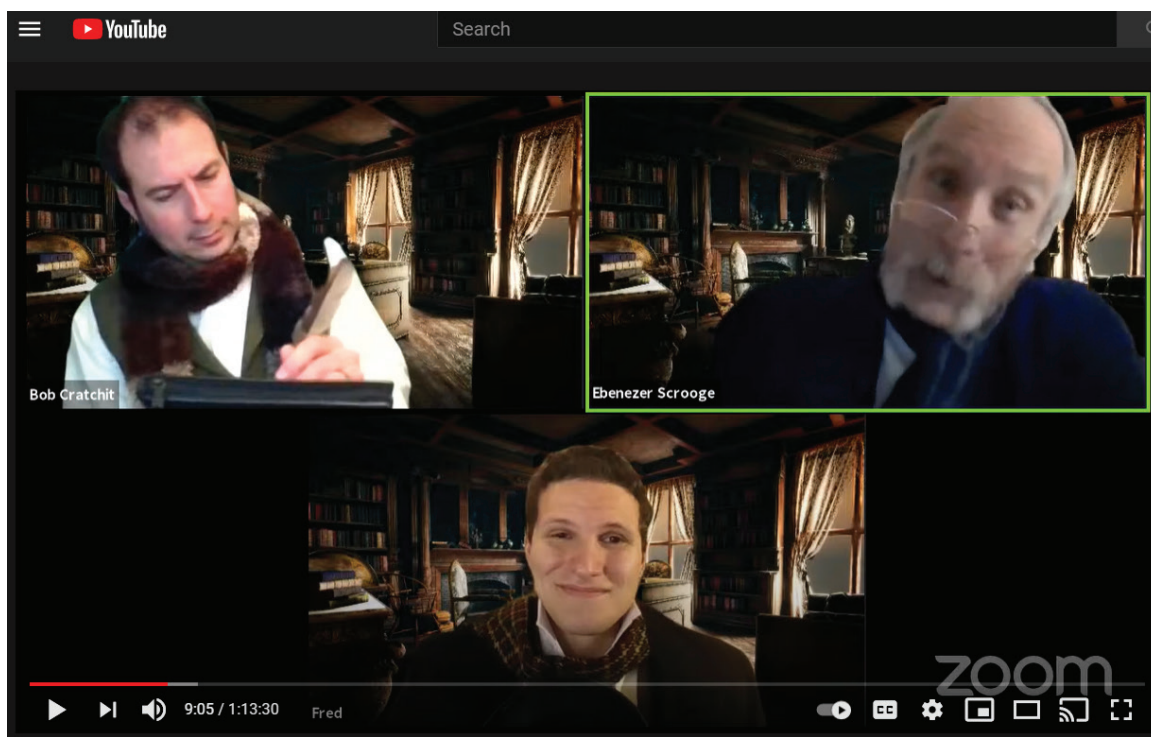
Founded in 2016 by Norfolk resident Lori Beck, Roundabout Productions invites area residents to fulfill their love of theater with local performances put on throughout the year. Past productions have included classics such as Oscar Wilde's "The Importance of Being Earnest" and Charles Dickens's "A Christmas Carol."

In particular, it was her love of the Dickens classic that inspired Beck to form Roundabout Productions. After stepping foot in the Norfolk Grange one day, she was inspired to put on a production of the holiday classic in that space, feeling that the acoustics of the room were perfect for it.

But now, the pandemic has taken the normal stresses of staging a play and exacerbated them. New challenges like finding a way to involve the audience in the emotion of a performance or staging the movement of the actors have become harder.

"It was a tough year," said Beck. "It was a tough year for everybody, especially for performing arts, which just took a huge hit."

The group was a week away from opening their first show



"A Christmas Carol" performed via Zoom.

of 2020 at their new venue, Coelho Middle School in Attleboro, when the lockdown began. Their halted production was put up as a live stream on Facebook, which made them realize that they could adjust to virtual productions.

Soon enough, they were able to create a better system to adapt their productions for the winter season.

The solution for Roundabout Productions has been to have the actors call into one Zoom meeting (everyone is calling in from separate locations of course), and to perform the play through Zoom. This virtual meeting is then broadcast as a live stream on YouTube, where people can watch the play in real time.

The group uses different backgrounds to match the intended set in each scene. Sound design has been another challenge, especially for last year's production of "A Christmas Carol." Using an app called BandLab, the group was able to layer vocal tracks on top of each other to create a choral effect.

Though virtual productions are limited in function, these methods have still been able to capture the feeling of a live performance for viewers. Still, Beck hopes that as vaccinations become more available in the coming months, the group will be able to share a stage for virtual or in-person productions.

Interestingly, some of the limitations of a virtual production

have provided new opportunities for the actors to grow. With the challenge of filling a screen, there is now a larger emphasis on facial expressions, something that creates more of a film environment compared to the traditional stage.

In another unexpected bonus, a virtual environment has allowed for more people from different locations to get involved. Though most actors are from local towns like Norfolk, Wrentham, and Franklin, Beck mentioned that they actually have an actor from California that's been able to participate virtually in "A Christmas Carol" and their upcoming production of Shakespeare's "The Comedy of Errors."

Even with all these challenges, feedback has been positive from the community. According to

Beck, they've had anywhere between 50 to 120 people watching the live streams at any one time.

Donations have been accepted for previous performances (the proceeds go to helping secure the rights for future productions), but Beck mentioned that the group is trying to implement a digital ticket price of \$5 for future shows. This ticketing system is still in the works, however.

The last year has been rough but the future is looking bright for Roundabout Productions. Their next show is a production of "God of Carnage," a dark comedy, with shows streaming on YouTube on March 25 and March 26.

"The plot is there are two sets of parents, and there's been a fight on the playground. These parents get together to iron out their differences, but you watch as these four grownups become more and more like children as they fight," said Beck.

And on the group's wish list? "Since day one, we've wanted to put on a musical," said Beck.

With the pandemic, it will be harder to put together a production of a musical since it demands a full stage. But they have hopes to eventually pull it off one day, with dream productions including "Fiddler on the Roof," "Sweeney Todd," and "Be More Chill."

Auditions for the upcoming production of "God of Carnage" are over, but last-minute auditions for their June production of "The Comedy of Errors" are still being accepted. For more information on the group, auditions, and their upcoming shows, check out roundaboutproductions.com.

Norfolk Lions College Scholarships Announced

The Norfolk Lions Club will be awarding four \$1,500 college scholarships to high school seniors who are residents of Norfolk. The students may attend public or private schools or be home schooled.

The scholarships will be awarded to candidates who have been actively involved in community service. Academic

performance and other extracurricular activities will also be factors in selection.

Scholarship applications will be available by March 1 and can be downloaded from www.norfolkmalions.org. Applications can also be obtained from the guidance office at King Philip Regional High School.

Completed applications with supporting documents must be emailed to the Norfolk Lions Scholarship Selection Committee at norfolkliionsssc@gmail.com. Submission due date is March 29.

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Will It Ever Go Away?

Just as COVID-19 itself can come with a range of symptoms, so too, can post COVID syndrome. The most common symptoms that can linger include: fatigue, shortness of breath, joint pain, chest pain, headaches, dizziness, long lasting loss of taste and/or smell, muscle weakness, sleep issues and brain fog, including an inability to concentrate and impaired memory.

Recently we have had an influx of patients recovering from COVID-19 that are complaining

of these symptoms. Abby G entered our office complaining of shortness of breath, headaches and brain fog. She wasn't sleeping well and felt defeated as well as becoming depressed wondering if she would ever be herself again. Although testing negative it was clear that the virus was still causing issues in her brain, lungs, muscles and tissues.

Abby started a program of care in our office including changes in diet, chiropractic adjustments and Neurologic Inte-

grative Systems work opening up channels in the nervous system for healing. Abby is reporting restful nights, decreased headaches and she is breathing easier. Her brain fog is clearing up and she is more hopeful of getting her life back.

If you or someone you know is a "long hauler" of COVID-19 and would like to make an appointment with Dr Michael Goldstein or with Dr Rochelle Bien call the Holistic Center at Bristol Square at (s)660-2722.



Dr. Rochelle Bien & Dr. Michael Goldstein

Garden Club seeks Donations to Renovate the Lower Veterans Memorial Gardens

The Garden Club of Norfolk is seeking donations to reach its goal of \$4,400 to renovate the Lower Veterans Memorial Gardens at the Norfolk Town Cemetery. The gardens are in the Veterans section of the historic 1745 cemetery located at Main and Seekonk Streets in Norfolk.

Donations can be made online in memory of a loved one or in honor of someone who served our country. Go to www.gardenclubofnorfolkma.com/shop to donate.

The club hopes to build a thriving native plant garden in memory of those who served our country. Their garden proposal is for a low-maintenance plan that includes native shrubs, grasses, and perennials. Purchase of plant materials and all work will be performed by club members.

In September, the Garden Club of Norfolk received a \$750.00 Civic Development Grant from the Garden Club Federation of Massachusetts for renovating the Lower Veterans Memorial Gardens. In addition to the grant, the Garden Club of Norfolk has received support from many local partners, including the Norfolk DPW, Norfolk American Legion Post 335, the Norfolk Historical Commission, and individual donations.

Once the club reaches its goal, members will begin planting, hopefully this spring.



Lower Veterans Gardens are the two areas presently covered by mulch to the left and right of the granite steps. Total area is 900 sq. feet.

The Garden Club of Norfolk, Inc. is a non-profit charitable organization that instructs its members and the public on all areas of horticulture and stimulates interest in the beautification of our community. Its active and honorary members are interested gardeners with all levels of expe-

rience and proficiency and new members are always welcomed. Residents interested in learning more about gardening or the club's activities, are invited to visit the club's award-winning webpage at www.gardenclubofnorfolkma.com.

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Living Healthy

Home Remedies for Simple Eye Problems

BY: ROGER M. KALDAWY, M.D.
Milford Franklin Eye Center

Many eye problems need an ophthalmologist's medical knowledge. But there are eye problems that you can treat safely at home, as long as they are simple. Here

are a few problems that can respond to home treatment, with tried-and-true remedies.

Black eye

You can usually treat a black eye at home. But if there are more serious symptoms of black

eye, see an ophthalmologist. These signs include: blurred/double vision; blood in the eye; or an inability to move the eye.

To reduce swelling and ease pain the first day, apply an ice pack to the eye for 15 to 20 min-





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utes at a time, once every hour. If you don't have an ice pack, use a bag of frozen vegetables or ice cubes wrapped in cloth. The cloth protects your skin from freezing. Don't put a raw steak or other raw meat on your eye. Despite what you've seen on television and in the movies, there's no scientific basis for this. In fact, the bacteria in raw meat poses a high risk of infection.

Pink eye (also known as conjunctivitis)

A virus causes most cases of pink eye. These cases don't respond to antibiotics. Viral conjunctivitis will disappear on its own. Have your ophthalmologist diagnose your particular case. Reduce the discomfort of conjunctivitis by applying cool com-

presses to the eye.

If your conjunctivitis is bacterial, follow your treatment plan. This usually involves antibiotic eye drops. In either case, you should take steps to reduce the chance of passing the problem on to someone else. Conjunctivitis is highly contagious. Follow these tips to prevent the spread: Don't share towels, handkerchiefs or cosmetics. Change pillowcases frequently. Wash your hands often.

Eye allergy and seasonal allergy

Just as you can get nasal allergies, you can get eye allergies that leave your eye red, itchy and teary. Limiting your exposure to the source of your allergy —

EYES

continued on page 9

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Living Healthy

EYES

continued from page 8

whether it's pollen, pets or mold — can help relieve symptoms. If you can't remove the source entirely, there are ways to reduce its effect with eye allergy treatments.

If pollen bothers you: Don't use a window fan, which can draw pollen into your house. Wear sunglasses when you go outside.

If dust is the problem: Use allergen-reducing covers for your bed. Use artificial tears, which temporarily wash allergens from your eyes. Use over-the-counter anti-allergy eye drops to lessen the symptoms.

Stye (also called hordeolum)

While a stye may look nasty, it's usually harmless and goes away within a week. You can treat it at home by running a washcloth under warm water, wringing it out and placing it over your closed eye. When the washcloth cools, repeat the process several times. Do this three to four times a day for at least a week. The heat will help unblock the pores in your eyelash area. Don't wear eye makeup or your contact lenses while you have a stye. And don't pop or squeeze the stye. Doing so can spread infection to surrounding areas of your eye. Shampooing with tea tree shampoo can also help.

Eye strain

Many people have symptoms of eye strain, because of long hours of computer use, reading and driving every day. In most cases, there are simple things you can do at home, work, and while driving to ease eye strain symptoms. These include: resting your eyes, using artificial tears, wearing computer glasses, and wearing sunglasses.

Bags under the Eyes

What we often call "bags under our eyes" is actually sagging skin under the eyes. It is a common complaint, and one that often accompanies the aging process. As we grow older, tissues around the eye gradually weaken and sag. This loss of skin tone allows fat to shift forward into the lower eyelids, making them look puffy and swollen. Fluid can also

pool in this area and contribute to the puffy appearance.

Certain home remedies can help lessen or eliminate the puffiness of under-eye bags and the appearance of shadows. Wet a clean washcloth with cool water. Place the damp washcloth around your eyes for a few minutes, applying very gentle pressure. Do this while sitting upright. Make sure you get enough sleep. Sleep with your head raised slightly. Try to avoid drinking fluids before bed, and limit salt in your diet. That can help reduce fluid retention overnight that can lead to bags under your eyes. Quit smoking. Try using makeup concealer to cover shadows under your eyes.

Use Common Sense for Your Eye Health

With any of these conditions, see your ophthalmologist right away if the symptoms worsen or don't go away, or if your vision is affected.

Some eye problems you should never treat on your own.

If you experience any of these, you should seek medical attention right away: Blurriness. Double vision. Pain in your eye. Serious eye injuries.

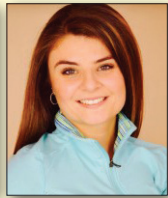
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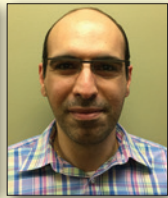
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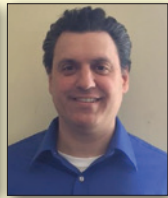
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King Philip Regional Music Department Announces Students Accepted into Music Festivals

Superintendent Paul Zinni is pleased to announce that members of the King Philip Regional Music Department were accepted into the All-State Music Festival and Southeast Junior District Festival.

"I would like to congratulate the students from King Philip Regional High School and King Philip Regional Middle School for their accomplishments through their participation in our music department," Superintendent Zinni said. "These students have worked incredibly hard during this challenging year and I am so proud to see their hard work pay off with their acceptances into these festivals."

All-State Music Festival

Following their auditions, seven King Philip Regional High Schools students were accepted into the All-State Music Festival. These students will participate in the chorus, orchestra and concert band performances.

Seniors Ava Cardner and Hayden Holster and junior Joseph Cannon were accepted into the concert band. Senior Camryn Buckley and junior Mathew Beatty were accepted into the chorus, and freshman Ella Brown and sophomore Finny Keefe were accepted into the orchestra.

The All-State Festival will be held virtually on Saturday, March 6. As part of the All-State Festival, the concerts showcase the talents of student musicians from across Massachusetts. The performance will feature four groups: chorus, jazz band, orchestra and symphonic band.

The All-State Festival is put on by the Massachusetts Music Educators Association (MMEA). It is organized to give the MMEA All-State students an opportunity to demonstrate their artistry and to create new friendships.

Southeast Junior District Festival

Students from across Southeastern Massachusetts and Cape Cod were also invited to audition for the Southeast Junior District Festival. Following auditions, four King Philip students were invited to participate in the festival.

Seventh grade students Teaghan Derfler-Murphy and Ignacio Rivera and freshman Ian Thompson were invited to join the band at the Southeast Junior District Festival, while eighth grade student Catherine Siedel was invited to join the jazz ensemble.

The Southeast Junior District Festival will take place virtually on Saturday, March 13. During the festival students will play collectively via a virtual platform with Steve Bell conducting the junior concert band and Lisa Linde conducting the junior jazz ensemble.

"Being chosen for Junior Districts is a major accomplishment, especially considering the competition amongst other schools in the region," King Philip Regional Middle School Band Director Joshua Wolloff said. "Although the festival is altered this year due to COVID-19, we look forward to our students gaining this experience and learning valuable skills about playing together."

Tri-County Superintendents' Roundtable Urges Gov. Charlie Baker to Reprioritize Educators for COVID-19 Vaccination

The Tri-County Superintendents' Roundtable, a unified group of 41 administrators joined by 24 union presidents of their respective districts, is urging Gov. Charlie Baker to reprioritize educators to make them eligible to receive COVID-19 vaccinations in the earlier part of Phase Two.

The administrators issued a letter to Gov. Baker outlining the basis of their request.

Phase One of the Commonwealth's COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Timeline

began in December 2020 and continued through January. All groups in Phase One became eligible to receive the vaccine on Thursday, Jan. 21.

On Monday, Jan. 25, the state announced that it had restructured Phase Two of the vaccination distribution plan, which now prioritizes individuals age 75 and older as the first group to receive the vaccine. Through the adjusted plan, educators are in the third group to become eligible for the vaccine through

Phase Two, which will begin in February and continues into March.

In their letter, administrators cited the guidance of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to prioritize the health and wellbeing of educators and the importance of bringing students back for in-person learning. The letter also noted the decisions of New York, Connecticut, and Maine, which have classified educators in the first phase of a vaccination timeline.

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Fix Depot Street

To the Editor:

My name is Depot Street. I am a road in Wrentham. I'm not a major road. I connect Route 1A to Route 140 and I'm only a one-way street. No street should have to live with the potholes I have. It's embarrassing to have cars dodge all those potholes. It would be so easy to fill them but no one is doing anything about it. Please help me.

Sincerely,

James Tarte
Wrentham

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Stock Market Uncertainty? A Fixed Indexed Annuity Can Help Put You At Ease

A crystal ball into the investing world – wouldn't that be useful! Unfortunately, predicting market performance to a T is not exactly possible. When markets experience downs, it is important to ask yourself: What can I do to help protect my savings and ensure future gains?

Market Uncertainty Heightens

December of 2019 marked the worst decline for stocks since the financial crisis in 2008. Anxiety overcame many around this market uncertainty. While calm settled over the financial markets once the New Year hit, COVID hit the world and life as we know it changed drastically. An uneasi-



ness that 2021 may continue to be volatile still remains. The potential of another government shutdown, trade wars, and increased interest rates all contribute to this uncertainty.

We Must Diversify!

When markets decline, financial portfolios ultimately go down in value. Get ahead of the curve by checking in on the risk tolerance of your financial portfolio and making sure to diversify accordingly.

Diversifying may be the most important part of retirement planning. While there is no one right answer – or guaranteed sure thing – having a balanced financial plan is a proven strategy for income growth and wealth protection. Diversifying can mean a mix of 401(k) funds, IRAs and Roth IRAs, fixed indexed annuities (FIAs), mutual funds, stock investments, and more.

Protect Your Principal

With the stock market, there is no guarantee of upcoming returns. This is a continuous reminder to think about how we

can continue to build our retirement income strategy. A smart first step is to evaluate savings vehicles that protect against market volatility. Enter a fixed indexed annuity (FIA).

An FIA helps protect your principal even in a negative market return. At the same time, it offers the opportunity to earn interest that is tied to the performance of a well-known index, such as the S&P 500, Dow Jones, NASDAQ, etc. The index is used as an external benchmark – you do not actually invest your funds in it. In all, FIAs are contracts with insurance companies, where potential interest earned is linked to an external index. Expect a guaranteed minimum rate of return and tax-deferred growth as well.

What's Next?

What will happen in the stock market? Anything is possible.

Until a crystal ball can accurately tell us what we can expect, it is up to retirement savers to make decisions that will protect them from what lies ahead.

Adding an FIA to your retirement portfolio could be part of the answer. Talk with a financial professional at Northeast Financial Strategies to understand the specific product features and if the benefits ladder up to your goals.

Jeffrey Schweitzer can be found at Northeast Financial Strategies Inc (NFS) at Wampum Corner in Wrentham. NFS works with individuals and small businesses providing financial and estate planning, insurance, investments and also offers full service accounting, bookkeeping, payroll, income tax preparation, and notary public services. For more information, stop by the office, call Jeffrey at 800-560-4NFS or visit online to set up an appointment - www.nfsnet.com



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School Districts Announce New Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Position

Districts to Conduct Survey To Receive Community Input

Superintendents Paul Zinni, David Raiche, Allan Cameron and Ingrid Allardi have announced that the King Philip, Plainville, Norfolk and Wrentham school districts will be hiring a Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion to serve all schools.

This newly created position will lead the King Philip Regional, Norfolk, Wrentham and Plainville Schools' efforts to build organizations based on equity, inclusion and belonging for all students, their families, staff and community members. The creation of this new position was made possible due to the continued efforts of the districts' Equity Committee, which has worked since the summer of 2019 to address diversity and equity issues in all communities.

In this position, the Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion will seek to create alignment and continuity between districts

as they pursue the goal of creating more equitable, just and inclusive learning environments. The director will report directly to the four district superintendents and will be a part of the regional administrative leadership team.

Due to budget constraints brought upon the districts as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the position will be funded through a Wellness grant that King Philip, Plainville, Norfolk and Wrentham schools received from the state.

"We recognize that existing systems disproportionately impact the most marginalized communities in our society, which directly impacts the wellness of our students," Superintendent Zinni said. "Without addressing these issues, we are not fully taking into account our students' entire wellbeing since marginalization and equity issues have wellness factors tied into them.

With the use of our Wellness grant to fund this position, we are continuing to address systemic issues that hinder our students while continuing to promote their mental health and wellbeing."

To ensure that the districts are addressing all the needs of their community members, the four districts will be releasing a survey for community members to fill out. School officials would like community members to use this survey as an opportunity to voice their ideas or any concerns they may have.

The survey will be released in the coming weeks and school officials urge students, parents and other community members to fill it out. All survey results will be reviewed and used to guide future conversations and initiatives, as well as be used in the hiring process for the Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion position.



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Schools Partner with INTERFACE Referral Service to Provide Outpatient Mental Health Referrals

Superintendents Paul Zinni, David Raiche, Allan Cameron and Ingrid Allardi, and Regional Director of Wellness Dot Pearl, have announced that the King Philip, Plainville, Norfolk and Wrentham school districts will be partnering with INTERFACE Referral Service of William James College to provide students in all four districts with access to outside providers for mental health services.

As students' mental health concerns continue to trend upward locally and nationally, families may often be unable to access mental health services and professionals outside of their school district. As a result, many students do not receive the services they need.

To assist families in accessing mental health services and professionals for their children, the

King Philip, Plainville, Norfolk and Wrentham school districts partnered with INTERFACE Referral Service to connect students with outpatient mental health clinicians in their area.

INTERFACE Referral Service is administered by William James College in Newton. The program helps provide avenues for parents and guardians to find outpatient mental health providers outside of school. The Helpline is available to all students in the four school districts who are dealing with mental health issues. It has been found to be helpful in navigating barriers to access to care.

"Oftentimes school counseling staff are spending a great deal of time seeking available outside providers for families or working with students who would benefit from a higher level of intervention beyond the scope of the

school professional," said Director Pearl. "Having INTERFACE Referral Service to assist families with addressing their child's mental health needs and identifying matched outpatient mental health providers will enable counselors to work with more of the students in their care during school hours."

The INTERFACE Helpline is available Monday through Friday, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Families can call to consult with resource and referral counselors about available resources and receive personalized matched referrals for their child. Referral matches are based on specialty need, availability, insurance or cost and location. Once families are provided a matched referral, the INTERFACE resource and referral counselor will follow up with the family within two weeks to check

on the status of the referral.

To reach the helpline, call 1-888-244-6843, Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

INTERFACE is not a hotline. Families or students in crisis who contact INTERFACE are assessed and referred to a crisis provider, if appropriate. In a mental health or substance use crisis, Riverside Community Care, the area Emergency Service Provider, is available 24/7 at 800-529-5077. Riverside is an alternative to going to an emergency room when in a crisis. Services are

provided on the phone or in the home, school or community setting.

To prepare for the launch of the resource and to help staff understand the service when referring families, Tanya Snyder, the clinical supervisor for INTERFACE, reviewed services with administrators and counseling team members from the four districts on Jan. 27. Monday, Feb. 1, was the first day parents/guardians, or school counselors, of the four districts could utilize INTERFACE Referral Services.

Guest Column

Navigating Gillette

By G. GREGORY TOOKER

The gridiron was a deep green in contrast with the snow surrounding the field. Your writer stood imagining the former days of glory as Master Brady led his gifted teammates to yet another victory. But the visit to New England's hallowed sports arena was on a more somber note as we waited in line to receive our dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

With the generous cooperation of the stadium owners, it has been temporarily converted to a mass vaccination site, permitting thousands of folks to receive their inoculations. The day was cold, in the low twenties. Most of those waiting were obviously beyond retirement age and despite the biting temperatures, remained upbeat and cheerful; but you had to imagine the smiles because all were masked against the deadly virus.

In former days, mothers taught that patience was a virtue and indeed, this was a situation where that advice needed to be taken to heart. One poor soul had slipped while mounting the

escalator, causing a long delay until the first responders could handle the accident. Despite the far greater than expected wait to enter the building, everyone remained calm and cheerful, displaying more concern for the fall victim than their own discomfort. A security guard walked up and down the line, apologizing profusely while explaining the reason for the delay.

When we eventually moved to the point where the vaccine is administered, we were amazed to see the large numbers of health care professionals, placed in a well-designed grid of medical stations. While your writer waited to be directed to an assigned station, the giant video screen over the playing field displayed in large characters the number of people thus far vaccinated at Gillette: 37,650.

The two security guards directing the medical station assignments were personable young men, obviously dedicated to their profession. They chatted amiably with each person in line which helped calm those

who were understandably nervous. The medical professional announced that she was administering her 99th injection that day but acted in a manner that was caring and concerned as she went through the list of questions that must be answered before the vaccine can be safely given. Then, in an instant, the wait was over.

As a courtesy to older folks who are not as comfortable with technology, a sign-up service to schedule the needed second inoculation is offered on site. Given the challenge your writer encountered in setting up the first appointment online, we opted to take advantage. Again, the personnel carrying out this task were very helpful.

The owners and operators of Gillette stadium are to be thanked for their generosity, agreeing to assist in the monumental challenge presented by mass immunization. It takes a team effort to accomplish this critical task and Gillette has deftly scored a touchdown.

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Planning, Prevention and Preparation Help Families Maintain Dignity and Control

BY DENNIS SULLIVAN & ASSOCIATES

Our team had a recent experience with our client, “Mrs. Cronin” a member of our Lifetime & Legacy Protection Program (LLP Program). Mrs. Cronin and her late husband, Mr. Cronin attended a seminar we held over 20 years ago with the AARP Legal Services Network. We helped the Cronins establish their estate plan and they kept it up to date with their membership in the LLP Program at Dennis Sullivan & Associates.

Mr. Cronin passed in his 80s, and Mrs. Cronin eventually had to go to a nursing home at age 93. We kept in touch visiting her to update her plan.

We learned Mrs. Cronin was having difficulties paying some bills for real estate taxes; we investigated to determine her health and medical needs and ensure her wishes were being met. Although it took considerable effort and coordination, due to COVID-19 protocols we were able to coordinate services on Mrs. Cronin’s behalf.

Unfortunately, we were rebuffed by nursing home personnel numerous times., nevertheless we persevered on her behalf all while Mrs. Cronin was locked in her room because of COVID-19 restrictions.

Hard Work & Mrs. Cronin’s Diligence & Dedication Pays Off

Despite numerous challenges, we were able to work with the bank regarding Mrs. Cronin’s Trust and the Power of Attorney as well as coordinating with the nursing home physician. Persistence, passion, perseverance, compassion, care and commitment by our team prevailed and eventually all of Mrs. Cronin’s goals and objectives (financial, health, tax), as well as her choices for health care were honored. She was even successful avoiding the time delay and the cost of two probate court proceedings (one for disability and one after death).

Our Main Responsibilities Were Met on Behalf of Mrs. Cronin

We accomplished Mrs. Cronin’s efforts to exercise her legal rights to retain control of not only financial decisions, but also



health decisions regarding end of life treatment made by trusted individuals, rather than having to go to court. Disability court proceedings are long and expensive and result in ongoing court involvement, expense and can mean unmet health and financial objectives.

Could you imagine if her care, was left up to the state, courts, and nursing home? Our team ensured that Mrs. Cronin’s choices were written into her documents, honoring that no unwanted extreme end of life measures were taken when the time came that she was at the end of life. We and her family were relieved that these goals were met.

Call 781-237-2815 or visit

DSullivan.com to discover the right steps to take now for peace of mind and for the future as the Cronin’s discovered.

Because of the pandemic it has been our experience that health care documents, DNRs and MA MOLSTs need to be reviewed and updated. Don’t let this happen to you.

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King Philip Leo Club Completes Community Service Projects

CONTRIBUTED BY DELLA CONLIN
KP LEO CLUB PUBLICIST

The King Philip Leo Club recently completed two successful community service projects.

Leo Club members, with the help of the KP National Honor Society, made and donated 60 blankets to Project Remember Me. Project Remember Me was started by Nick Georgette, KP Class of 2017, to honor his father who passed away from early-onset Alzheimer’s disease at the age of 55. Nick noticed that residents in the nursing home where his father lived frequently did not have warm blankets, so he started collecting and distributing blankets to them as a way to show someone cared.



The KP Leo Club also worked last month to create Valentine’s Day cards for residents of the Wrentham Developmental Center. With the help of the KP Peer Mentor program and local Girl Scout troops, the Leo Club gave over 200 hand-written cards to

residents, surpassing their goal.

The KP Leo Club would like to thank everyone who participated in these projects.

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FSPA's First Ever Movie-Musical



The Franklin School for the Performing Arts (FSPA) presented a COVID-safe virtual movie-musical production of The SpongeBob Musical on February 27 and 28. There were two different movie-musicals, one featuring students in grades 8-12 and one highlighting FSPA's younger musical theater performers.

The project was filmed entirely on iPhones with all COVID distancing and mask protocol being followed at all times. Some scenes featured students recording in their homes edited together, while others featured the students masked and distanced at different locations all around the Town of Franklin. The project provided a unique opportunity for FSPA's musi-

cal theater students to explore the world of musicals made for the screen all while staying safe. The teen production filmed the end of their exciting opening number on a shutdown Main Street. The cast also utilized locations like Fletcher Field, Intermission Cafe, THE BLACK BOX, the YMCA, and more.

The SpongeBob Musical is based on the beloved animated series created by Stephen Hillenburg and features a book by Kyle Jarrow, with original songs by Yolanda Adams, Steven Tyler and Joe Perry of Aerosmith, Sara Bareilles, Jonathan Coulton, Alexander Ebert of Edward Sharpe & The Magnetic Zeros, The Flaming Lips, Lady Antebellum, Cyndi Lauper, John Legend, Panic! At the Disco,

Plain White T's, They Might Be Giants and T.I., and songs by David Bowie, Tom Kenny and Andy Paley. Additional lyrics are by Jonathan Coulton, with additional music by Tom Kitt.

FSPA's teen production was directed by FSPA alum and faculty member Ali Funkhouser and the youth production was directed by FSPA Drama Director Nick Paone.

With extensive programs in music, dance, and drama all housed under one roof, FSPA is uniquely positioned to offer an immersive interdisciplinary musical theater experience. Younger students explore the exciting world of musical theater with an introduction to basic skills in singing, acting, and dancing, while older and more advanced students build upon this foundation with increasingly challenging repertoire, technique, and scene work. Musical theater history and audition technique round out the department's hands-on, multi-disciplinary opportunities. Alumni of FSPA's Musical Theater program have gone on to perform on Broadway, in national tours, regional theater, cruise ships, and other venues around the world.

To learn more about FSPA's programming, visit www.FSPA-online.com or by call 508-528-8668.

Held Hostage in the Capitol

To the Editor:

One hundred ninety-nine Grand Old Party Congressional representatives recently voted against removing Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene from her committee posts. Given the extraordinary conspiracy-related statements unleashed by Ms. Greene both before and after her election to Congress, one would question if we have wandered into the contorted world of Lewis Carroll's Wonderland.

On the surface, those members of the struggling GOP appear to have acted in a manner that flies in the face of logic, since a good portion of their respective constituents will be seriously perplexed by their decision. But, in deference to those who did disregard the apparently overwhelming argument that Rep. Greene should be appropriately admonished, let's look a bit more deeply into the thought processes which may be at work.

The scene at the Capitol building on January 6 was shockingly surreal, a fictional film hatched in the mind of Orson Welles. Our elected representatives, be they from the left, center or right, were justifiably terrified. The threatening language directed at Congressional leadership throughout the election campaign had already put many candidates on guard, with some under 24-hour surveillance. Now, they were facing a ravenous mob carrying weapons with an intent to use them.

The various domestic lunatic fringe factions that have long avoided badly needed scrutiny by our national security resources do not hesitate when it comes to leveling threats at those who stray from the party line.

This was clearly demonstrated in Georgia, Michigan and other states as the election drew near. So it is not beyond the realm of possibility that the threat of violent retribution was clearly on the minds of those House Republicans as they risked being targeted if they voted to reprimand and remove Congresswoman Greene. Eleven Republicans had the courage to do so. It is very likely many more would have if the vote were anonymous.

Sincerely,

G. Gregory Tooker,
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Facebook Group Trying to Save Local Restaurants

BY GRACE ALLEN

Larry Curran and Ed Tocci are on a mission. The two long-time friends are helping drive business to scores of local restaurants hurt by the restrictions and shutdowns of the past year.

In January of 2020, the men started the Facebook Group “Norfolk County Eats” as a way to share recipes with friends and family and review local restaurants. The membership grew, fueled by fellow foodies inviting their own family and friends.

And then the pandemic hit. People were stuck at home and cooking more than ever. The social media group became even more active as members posted photos of their own culinary creations—however humble—and were cheered on by other group members.

“The group has really helped people during the pandemic because everyone was sharing and becoming friends,” said Tocci, a Needham resident. “It’s made everyone feel closer to one another.”

But at the same time, the state’s restrictions on restaurants were taking a toll. Thousands of restaurant employees were forced out of work and businesses were in danger of closing permanently. Tocci and Curran, a Norwood resident, decided they would try to help.

“We encouraged people in the group to try different restaurants that were open, place takeout orders, or buy gift cards,” explained Tocci. “Anything just to keep them going. Because when this is over, we want to go back to these places and we want them to still be there.”

Tocci used to be in the restaurant business himself so he understands their struggles right now.

“I know what it’s like. It’s not easy,” he said.

By harnessing the help of the group’s members—over 10,000 at last count—both Tocci and Curran have started to make some impact. They have spotlighted eateries like Rhapsody’s Victorian Coffeehouse and



Larry Curran, left, and Ed Tocci are the founders of Norfolk County Eats.

Larry Curran with Lidia Bastianich, an Emmy award-winning television host, best-selling cookbook author, and restaurateur. Curran met Bastianich at a book signing.

Alumni Restaurant in Franklin, Vico Ristorante Italiano and Tasos Euro Café in Norwood, Café Assisi and Parker’s Pub, both in Wrentham, and Horse n’ Carriage in Norfolk.

Curran in particular will visit and post photos of his restaurant meals, and then encourage other members to visit and post their orders, too. After all, people eat with their eyes, says Tocci.

On January 2, Curran posted about Cilla’s Coffeehouse in Norfolk, noting the coffeehouse was experiencing financial difficulties and encouraging members to visit. The post caught the attention of the region’s SWAT team and over 50 members arrived one morning to place orders and support the establishment. That

surprise visit by law enforcement made the news, further driving more business to the coffeehouse.

Similarly, Norfolk County Eats members have championed the Primavera in Millis after learning the Italian eatery was also struggling. In January, owner Jerry Gaita posted his thanks on the group’s page.

“This past Friday and Saturday were SUPER BUSY... we have not been this busy in many months. It’s felt like the old days...better days are coming. Larry and team are doing a great job spotlighting small businesses.”

Norfolk County Eats is a very active group. Members respond to posts within minutes, and the discussions are upbeat and respectful. After a prime rib recipe post by Curran went viral and people from all over the U.S. and from as far away as Italy and France asked to join, the administrators decided to limit new membership to Massachusetts residents only.

There are a few rules in the group, mostly centering on kindness and courtesy towards others. Members have messaged

the administrators and expressed thanks for the positive atmosphere fostered by Tocci and Curran, along with fellow administrator Tamara Cullen and moderator Lois Kleberg Bertolino Arena.

When the pandemic is finally over, Tocci says the group will try to have a meet-and-greet for members. If the number of daily posts is any indication of interest, they’d better find a very big venue for the event.

Whether this grassroots effort by area food fans will help prop up struggling establishments in the long-term remains to be seen. But the evolution of the group, with its love of food and the fellowship of other like-minded gastronomes, has gratified Tocci and Curran.

“When we started this group, we thought this would be a nice little platform to discuss our passion for food and we hoped people would be interested and want to join,” said Tocci. “And it’s grown into being so much more than we ever expected.”

For more information about the group or to join, visit Norfolk County Eats on Facebook.

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D.A. Morrissey's Expungement Legislation Becomes Law

Cleaning up old criminal records, which can be barriers to employment, education, and training, just got easier through legislation drafted by Norfolk District Attorney Michael W. Morrissey.

"The sweeping police reform bill signed by the Governor on New Year's Eve included the expansion of the expungement statute that Representative Tackey Chan and I filed in 2019," District Attorney Morrissey said. "It also includes a provision allowing those who were previously rejected to resubmit if they are now eligible."

Massachusetts has long had a statute allowing for some criminal records to be sealed, but that is of only limited help when applying for certain employment, training, education, and types of housing. The Criminal Justice Reform Act of 2018 created the first expungement process, whereby a judge can erase certain non-violent offenses entirely, if a person meets criteria including being under 21 at the time of offense.

"I brought together members of the judiciary, court personnel, the defense bar, and my prosecution staff, for a training seminar on the initial expungement statute in December of 2018. We began working with defense attorneys to get those petitions moving," District Attorney Morrissey said. "Within a few months of beginning that push, it became clear to me that the law was too narrowly drawn to achieve its intended restorative and social justice goals."

Prior to the change proposed by D.A. Morrissey, submitted by Rep. Chan (D-Quincy), and co-sponsored by Rep. Carolyn Dykema (D-Holliston), records could only be expunged if they contained a single charge, even if multiple charges arose from the same incident.

"We saw people being excluded from the process because they were charged with both trespassing and disorderly conduct for a single event. It made no sense," D.A. Morrissey said. The piece, Bill H.3250 (malegislature.gov), received a favorable report from the Judiciary Committee

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after D. A. Morrissey met with committee's House Chair, Rep. Claire Cronin. "I am thankful that the Legislature, and in particular Representatives Chan, Dykema, and Cronin who saw the importance of this. They recognize that sometimes people need and deserve a second chance."

The expanded law still excludes sex offenses, violent crimes, and operating under the influence. "The expansion is modest. But if the objective of the expungement statute is to recognize that a single mistake or dumb decision should not necessarily haunt someone forever, this change achieves that goal more thoroughly," Morrissey said.



State Rep. Tackey Chan, left, with District Attorney Michael W. Morrissey. *Courtesy Photo*



House Judiciary Committee Chair Claire Cronin with District Attorney Michael W. Morrissey. *Courtesy Photo*

The Massachusetts criminal justice system has evolved in several other ways to reflect the changing scientific understanding of the developing brain and how it shapes behavior across time – including increasing the age for entry to adult court up to 18.

Under this section, those looking to clean up their records should first contact the Probation Department's expungement hotline at 617-557-0225. "The law has already taken effect," Morrissey said. "People can call today."

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Sports

Volleyball Captains are Superb Ambassadors for KP

Trio's Perspective on COVID-19 is Impressive

By KEN HAMWEY
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

The King Philip volleyball team has a trio of senior captains who are dynamic ambassadors for their school.

Their leadership skills are superb and their abilities on a volleyball court are top-notch. But, what's even more impressive is their perspective in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. The captains are Nicole Coughlan, a six-foot middle hitter; Emma Brooks, a 5-foot-6 libero/defensive specialist; and 5-foot-5 Lily Carlow, another libero/defensive specialist.

The captains are gearing up for their final interscholastic season, which was moved from last fall to what's now labeled the "Fall 2" season. Because of the coronavirus, volleyball competition was delayed but will get under way this month.

Their coach, Kristen Geuss, not only turns out exceptional volleyball players, but she also molds her competitors into top quality individuals, on and off the court. Here's what she says about the trio:

"These girls have worked hard for four years and they've all played at the varsity level for three seasons. I've watched them grow into mature, responsible individuals, both on and off the court. I'm very proud to have them as captains and to have them represent King Philip athletics. I look forward to seeing them compete this year and to lead the team to a successful season."

Geuss also admires her captains' intense desire and their skill level.

"Nicole has been a Hockomock League all-star twice and she's a two-time captain who led the team in kills (252) last year. She can find holes in a defense and she's a strong server. Emma, an honorable-mention all-star last year, led the team in digs (151) and she led the league in aces (88). She's a strong server, she's versatile and solid in the back row. Lily gives 100 percent every day. She's quick, strong, a fierce

competitor and totally dedicated to volleyball. All the captains are exceptional leaders."

The trio played a key role in KP's 18-5 record last year that led to a tie for the Hockomock League championship and a berth in the Sectional final. When the Fall 2 season gets underway, the Warriors will open at Mansfield on March 11 at 5 p.m.

So, here's what the girls say about the coming season, their passion for volleyball, the pandemic, their most memorable game, their coach and their futures:

NICOLE COUGHLAN

The 18-year-old Coughlan is a native of Wrentham who thrives when she's on a volleyball court.

"I like the pace of the sport, it's a team game and every play is different," she said. "Playing middle hitter enables me to get kills and blocks and there's no better feeling when those occur. I also enjoy passing and setting. What makes the sport so thrilling is that you have to work hard for every possession."

A captain who leads by example and by being vocal and supportive, Coughlan was a bit uneasy when it appeared that volleyball could be canceled, like all the spring sports in 2020. "I was nervous during the time it was unknown if we'd be playing," she said. "When we learned that volleyball was being moved to the Fall 2 season, there was a sense of relief. We're blessed to get this opportunity."

The modifications, like wearing masks, social distancing on the bench, hand-sanitizing, and crowd limits are all aspects that Coughlan can deal with.

"During summer and fall league, all of us wore masks," she noted. "We'd rather have changes and new rules than no season. But, what's most important is the health and safety of everyone. If we had no volleyball but a guarantee that the virus would disappear and everyone would be safe, I definitely could live with that. Health is the No. 1 priority."



KP's volleyball captains are, from left, Nicole Coughlan, Lily Carlow, and Emma Brooks.

Coughlan's goals this season are lofty.

"I'd like to see KP go unbeaten, win the Kelly-Rex Division and capture a post-season title if there are playoffs," she emphasized. "Individually, I'd like to lead the division in kills and get more blocks."

Citing last year's Sectional semifinal victory over Quincy as her most memorable game, Coughlan has some interesting thoughts about that contest. "Their crowd was booing us constantly," she said. "But, we pulled together and persevered. It was an awesome feeling to win and that game helped me to gain confidence as a player and a leader."

A fan of her coach, Coughlan rates Geuss as "a great motivator" and a coach who "sees our potential and pushes us to reach that level."

A firm believer in hard work, Coughlan, who's a National Art Honor Society student, plans on a career in dentistry. Whatever college she chooses, she's likely to compete in volleyball at the club level.

EMMA BROOKS

The 18-year-old Brooks is a native of Norfolk who enjoys her role as a libero.

"It's a position where you have control of the start of every play," she noted. "I like diving for the ball and keeping play alive. I thrive on volleyball because it produces lots of surprises and to deal with that you have to be instinctive."

A captain who combines leading by example with being vocal and supportive, Brooks believes that earning her teammates' trust will help the squad to succeed. Nervous about losing the season last fall, she was pleased when officials moved volleyball to March and April.

"I was relieved after hearing we'd play in the Fall 2 season," she said. "I'm hoping the virus will relent and that the new season can have some normalcy. We've got a glimmer of hope and we're all ready to deal with the changes and modifications. We're thankful we've had two good seasons of volleyball and now we'll have a third. My hope is that the elderly stay safe and everyone can be healthy."

Brooks is hopeful the Warriors will have a quality season. "I'd like to see us win as many games as possible and capture the division title," she said. "My personal goals are to increase my serve receives and to lead the league again in aces."

Also pointing to the five-set triumph over Quincy as her most meaningful game, Brooks was pleased that every member of the squad contributed. "We all had solid efforts," she said. "It was a tense matchup because the winner would advance to the Sectional final."

Relying on a competitive philosophy of winning and having fun, Brooks is a fan of her coach for several reasons. "Coach Geuss has helped me to be a stronger person since my sophomore year," she emphasized. "She's a terrific motivator who helps to build confidence in her players."

Brooks is a National Honor Society student who plans on majoring in health science and biology in college. She's aiming for a career as a physician's assistant.

LILY CARLOW

The 17-year-old Wrentham native is a libero who relies on an intense competitive desire. As a defensive specialist, Carlow strives to control the game's tempo.

"I enjoy playing libero because it's an active position where control of the pace is a key," she said.

"It's important to be quick and instinctive because the hits come at you super hard. I like volleyball primarily because it's a high-energy game and a team sport that features six girls working for one point."

Carlow's emotions were up and down as the pandemic raged and posed a threat to cancel the season.

"I was apprehensive at first but was relieved that it was moved to the Fall 2 time," she noted. "I'm happy to be playing, even with less games scheduled. And, we can deal with all the modifications. It's sad we won't have a normal season but we're not in normal times. The top priority, however, is everyone's health and safety. I'm close to my grandparents and I want them to be healthy and safe."

Carlow's goals this season include "taking nothing for granted, focusing on one match at a time and winning every game." She also would like to "improve my jump serves and increase my number of serve receives."

The tourney victory over Quincy is also the most memorable moment of her volleyball career. "We never experienced heckling or booing in Hockomock League games but we heard them that game," she recalled. "We responded by stepping up against a highly partisan crowd. We all contributed and the victory remains a fond memory."

Labeling Geuss as "a supportive coach," Carlow likes her motivational style. "Coach Geuss is the team's primary leader and she leads by example," said Carlow, whose father is KP's varsity ice hockey coach. "She makes us earn our playing time and work to reach our potential."

A captain who'll lead by example and by being supportive, Carlow hopes her leadership style will rub off on others. Her athletic philosophy is all about winning. "When you win, that creates fun," she said.

Serving as president of the National Art Honor Society, Carlow will major in education and hopes to be a high school teacher.

Sports

Tri-County Voke set to Resume Athletic Competition

Cougars Went 3 Seasons with No Sports

By KEN HAMWEY
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

The long wait is finally over. Tri-County Vocational High School will be competing in varsity sports during the Fall 2 season that got underway with pre-season practice on Feb. 22. Nine teams will begin play with reduced schedules and, for the most part, their opponents will be Mayflower League squads.

The Cougars have not participated in athletics for three consecutive seasons and that timeframe covers almost a year.

Last spring, Tri-County was unable to compete when the Mass. Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA) canceled all sports throughout the state because of the COVID-19 pandemic. When the fall season approached, 15 of the 16 Mayflower League schools decided to move all autumn sports to the newly-created Fall 2 timeframe (West Bridgewater stood pat for the fall). Then, before the winter season started, Tri-County canceled all sports because the school was moving 100 percent to in-person vocational instruction while academic learning remained fully remote.

The Cougars' teams that will play in March and April include football, boys and girls soccer, volleyball, golf, boys and girls cross-country, cheerleading and boys ice hockey.

"Sports will definitely return," said Athletic Director Sara Martin at Local Town Pages deadline (Feb. 15). "But, one question remains with the weather. Take soccer for example. If it snows considerably, there'll be no games because we don't have artificial turf. And, most practices for Fall 2 will be inside."

Martin is hopeful the Fall 2 season will be a return to some degree of normalcy.

"The athletes have missed structured settings," she said. "Now, they can reunite with their teammates and coaches. This year is about providing opportunities. We just want the kids to be able to compete and hopefully complete their schedules. I'd prefer that our teams win but since we're still battling the virus, this is a time to adhere to the changes and modifications that the MIAA requires."

The Fall 2 teams will be dealing with similar changes that were implemented for the fall and winter squads. They include wearing masks, socially distancing on the bench, using hand sanitizer, crowd limits, no locker-room presence and bus limits for athletes.

Although many schedules are complete, some are still undergoing changes and updates. Tri-County's Mayflower League opponents include Norfolk Agricultural, Southeastern Regional, Bristol-Plymouth, Old Colony, Diman Voke, Blue Hills Regional, Upper Cape Regional, Cape Cod Tech, Bristol Agricultural, South Shore Vocational, Avon, Bishop Connolly, Holbrook, West Bridgewater and Westport.

The league's schools moved fall sports to March and April because they didn't have specific answers to a variety of questions.

"The feeling was that we didn't have a handle on the virus, like how far-reaching it would be," Martin said. "We wanted to know more about contact-tracing and we needed answers to questions. Do the athletes need masks while running? Would masks hurt their oxygen level while competing. What happens when there's contact with players who are sweating? If we erred, it was on the side of safety."

When the winter sports season was called off at Tri-County,

Martin filled the void with an intramural program and open skating at the Pirelli Veterans Arena rink.

"We started intramurals in mid-December," she said. "The sports were boys and girls basketball, co-ed volleyball, indoor track and a strength and conditioning program. Each team got one day a week to practice and compete. We followed all the virus protocols and capped the numbers at any one time at 25. The key was to address social, emotional and physical needs."

Skating at the rink occurred on Tuesdays and Fridays in one-hour sessions from January to mid-February.

Martin, who teaches history (3-4 classes daily), is very adept at multi-tasking. She's often juggling in a variety of ways — with sports schedules, rotating gym-time practices, busing details and ensuring that monitors and a trainer are available.

"For the Fall 2 season, I'll be relying on our coaches and team leaders (captains) to be models for wearing masks, socially distancing and using hand sanitizer. Coaches will have to realize that practices during Fall 2 won't be as plentiful as they were during normal times."

Now in her third year as the Cougars A.D., Martin is optimistic about the 2021-22 school year. She even uses the "normal" word when looking to the future.

"I do see some normalcy," she emphasized. "The vaccines will help and lessen anxiety and we'll have a better handle on how to manage close contact. We now know more about how contagious the virus is. We'll pick up in August at pre-season and masks likely will be used for awhile. With the focus on monitoring long-range conditions, everything can return to the way it was."



Tri-County Athletic Director Sara Martin will be checking in on nine of the school's teams during the Fall 2 season.

The personable Martin is quick to credit Tri-County's custodial staff and its vocational teachers for their prudence in adhering to the precautions to prevent the virus from spreading. "They've been in school all this time and it's a testament to them that there hasn't been any in-school infection or transmission of the virus," she noted.

Martin also deserves some notice for the way she's handled parental complaints, student-athlete concerns and all the uncertainty that COVID-19 has created.

"There's been parental complaints, but for every negative opinion, we get about four positive ones," she noted. "Some parents call and ask how they can help. Students express disappointment when their sport is delayed. Some think we're not pro-active but we have to wait for guidance from the MIAA, the Executive Office of Energy and Environment, the leagues, the school superintendent, the Board of Health and the School Committee."

Martin said she's heard athletes express excitement about the Fall 2 season. And, it all centers around competing again. "The hockey players are glad they can play in March and April, and football players in January said 'football is just a month away.' I certainly understand the frustration they've had to endure."

Tri County athletes have been on the sidelines for almost a year. But, that situation is about to change. Martin hopes the pandemic will fade in the future and her comments on that front are very telling.

"When its grip is loosened or greatly reduced, my emotions will be relief and pride," Martin said. "When August rolls around and all the athletes are sweating and exhausted at practices, we can all look back and say we've grown and that we appreciate our opportunities more."

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FSPA Announces Summer 2021 Programming

FRANKLIN- Franklin School for the Performing Arts (FSPA) has announced their Summer 2021 offerings and enrollment is underway. In addition to summer weekly classes, FSPA will hold one week camps including Creative Kids, Acting, Broadway, Little Music School Experience, Rock Out!, and ProVoice.

FSPA will also offer 5 weeks of Summer Theater. Students can sign up for one or more of the offerings. The more students participate, the more they save. July 21-23 for grades 5-12 is Broadway Boot Camp.

Broadway Boot Camp brings Broadway's brightest talents to FSPA for song and dance master classes and coaching on individual performance skills. July 26-29 is the Cabaret Show for grades 5-12. Students will hone their skills and tap into their potential with a focus on performance skills, including repertoire choices, song interpretation, and presentation. The week concludes with a cabaret-style revue at THE BLACK BOX,

showcasing solo and small ensemble pieces that have been workshopped during the week.

Week 3, August 2-6 is a one week intensive for grades 3-8 and 8-12 that will focus on the rehearsal and preparation of a play that will be performed at THE BLACK BOX. The plays will be selected for each age group based on enrollment.

Weeks 4 and 5, August 9-20, culminate with the production of a book musical staged at THE BLACK BOX. Auditions for placements occur in May or early June. Grades 3-7 and 8-12.

The FSPA Ballet Conservatory will offer two intensives. The pre-professional summer intensive offers a four-week program for the dedicated and serious ballet student wanting to further ballet training and performance skills. A rigorous schedule of classical ballet technique, pointe, modern, dance history, and character is provided. Students will be divided by their current ballet level for technique, pointe, select variations and choreography to

ensure and maintain a challenging curriculum for every dancer. Additional disciplines may vary depending on enrollment and teacher availability. This intensive is for FSPA Conservatory Levels III/IV/V/VI, or by audition for ages 12+. It runs June 28-July 23 (4 weeks) Monday-Friday 9:30-3:00.

The three-week "Young Intensive" program is designed to challenge and motivate the young dancer. Instruction in classical ballet technique, pre-pointe, character, modern and dance history is offered. Additional disciplines may vary depending upon enrollment and teacher availability. The Young Dancers Program caters to FSPA Conservatory Levels I (2nd year)/II/III, or by audition ages 8-11. It runs July 5-23 (3 weeks) Monday-Thursday 9:30-3:00.

FSPA is located at 38 Main Street, Franklin MA. To register or learn more, visit www.FSPA-online.com or call 508-528-8668.



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Real Estate Corner

King Philip DECA Recognized for Outstanding School-Based Enterprise

The King Philip Mini Mall, the school-based enterprise at King Philip Regional High School, was among 246 school-based enterprises achieving gold certification for the 2020-2021 school year and will be recognized during DECA's Virtual International Career Development Conference this April.

A school-based enterprise (SBE) is an entrepreneurial operation in a school setting that provides goods and services to meet the needs of the market. SBEs are managed and operated by students as hands-on learning laboratories that integrate National Curriculum Standards in marketing, finance, hospitality and management.

KP DECA advisers have utilized this educational tool for more than four decades to provide their students with realistic and practical learning experiences that reinforce classroom instruction, enhance 21st century skill development and prepare students for college and careers.

The KP DECA members who contributed to the certification were Emma Naggar and Abby Nixon, with the assistance

of DECA Marketing Coordinator James Dow. The King Philip Mini Mall has operated for four years.

"We are extremely pleased with the success of the King Philip Mini Mall," Coordinator Dow said. "The success of this program falls solely to the hard-working students who have shown dedication and perseverance through DECA's chapter program."

DECA's School-based Enterprise Certification Program provides recognition for outstanding achievement by school-based enterprises and motivates SBEs to strive for excellence and growth. SBEs can be certified at three levels: bronze, silver or gold. In order to apply for the certification, SBEs must submit extensive documentation that explains how their SBE demonstrates the practice of various marketing and retail standards.

A review committee evaluates the documentation to determine which level of certification has been achieved. DECA's School-based Enterprise programs are sponsored by Intuit and Otis Spunkmeyer, Inc.

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Landscape Oasis of Norfolk Awarded Best of Houzz 2021

Coveted annual award highlights home remodeling and design professionals with top ratings and most popular designs among the Houzz community

Landscape Oasis of Norfolk has won a "Best of Houzz" award for Customer Service for the 5th time on Houzz®, the leading platform for home renovation and design. The residential landscape design and landscape construction firm was chosen by the millions of homeowners that comprise the Houzz community from among more than 2.5 million active home building, remodeling and design industry professionals.

The Best of Houzz badge is awarded annually for Customer Service. Honors are based on several factors, including a pro's overall rating on Houzz and client reviews submitted in 2020. A "Best of Houzz 2021" badge will appear on winners' profiles as a sign of their commitment to excellence. These badges help

homeowners identify popular and top-rated home professionals in every metro area on Houzz.

"We are very proud of the recognition that the members of the Houzz community, and the towns surrounding and including the Norfolk community have bestowed on our firm. We truly strive to be a leader in customer service in all three areas of our focus: Design, Construction and Garden Care or as we like to say: Conceive, Create and Care. We Conceive of a great idea to Create an Oasis at your home and then Care for it after to make sure you get complete enjoyment of your new Landscape Oasis," said David Hancox, President, Landscape Oasis LLC.

"The Best of Houzz awards are an emblem of trust and credibility for home professionals

across the U.S. and around the world, and we are excited to celebrate this year's winners," said Liza Hausman, vice president of Industry Marketing for Houzz. "The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the critical need for people to feel comfortable before inviting pros into and around their homes, and the Best of Houzz badge is a powerful way for pros to communicate the trust that homeowners have in their business. It's just one of many tools on the Houzz platform that help pros to communicate their unique expertise, and homeowners to find the right professionals for their projects."

About Landscape Oasis

Landscape Oasis brings the 42 years of design and construc-

tion management experience of David Hancox to Norfolk and the Greater Boston area. The Landscape Oasis design office is located at 206 Main Street in Norfolk. Landscape Oasis can take your dream and bring it to reality combining the skill of their design staff with computer aided design tools. In-house designers follow through with the management and construction to create just the Oasis you envisioned by utilizing plants, water, stone, wood, metal and many other unique materials. Whether your dreaming of a pool, patio or garden paradise Landscape Oasis has a design for you.

About Houzz

Houzz is the leading platform for home renovation and design, providing people with everything they need to improve their homes from start to finish. On Houzz, people can find design

inspiration, research and hire home professionals, and shop for products to complete their projects. For home professionals, Houzz Pro (houzz.com/pro) provides an all-in-one software solution that empowers industry pros to stand out, win clients and manage their projects efficiently and profitably. The Houzz community is made up of millions of homeowners, home design enthusiasts and home improvement professionals around the world. Houzz is available on the web and as a top-rated mobile app. Headquartered in Palo Alto, California, Houzz also has international offices in London, Berlin, Sydney, Moscow, Tel Aviv and Tokyo. Houzz is a registered trademark of Houzz Inc. worldwide. For more information, visit houzz.com.

Local Mortgage Expert Offers Free Virtual Homebuyer Seminar

Michael Shain of Bay Equity Home Loans will host a free virtual homebuyer seminar on Monday, March 15 from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. The seminar will be held in conjunction with the Bellingham Public Library.

Are you considering homeownership? At this seminar, you'll learn crucial information for homebuying success and leave with tools you need to get started on your search:

- The importance of credit
- Finding the right mortgage loan program
- The difference between buyer agents and listing agents
- How to win a bidding war
- The benefits of being pre-approved.

Buyers with the latest information will be more successful in the ever-changing real estate market.

Pre-Registration is required. Call the Bellingham Public Library at 508.966.1660 or visit <https://www.bayeq.com/mike-shain/> then scroll to Events. The link for the virtual event will be sent the day before and day of the event.

About Mike Shain:

Shain has more than 30 years of banking and mortgage lending experience and hosts "Real

Estate and Beyond," a local TV show about home buying and selling trends.

About Bay Equity:

Bay Equity is a family-owned, full-service retail mortgage lending institution that prioritizes personal relationships. Founded in 2007 and licensed in 42 states. For more about Bay Equity Home Loans, visit: www.bayequityhomeloans.com.



Real Estate Corner

Stony Brook Camera Club Upcoming Programs

The Stony Brook Camera Club has many informative virtual speaker programs coming up in March and April, including programs on landscape photography and post processing.

SBCC is a vibrant group of over 150 photographers ranging from beginner to expert. The club meets weekly via Zoom from September to June with presentations by nationally and internationally known speakers as well as competitions and

image studies. SBCC offers scholarships to deserving high school seniors from the area who intend to study photography in college.

Visit www.StonyBrookCC.com to find out more and to view the full calendar of events. See "Be Our Guest" on the homepage to be notified of the Zoom connection for the next meeting. This registration entitles visitors to a 30-day free membership and access to weekly meetings.



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